

By Senator Aronberg

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the Rural Infrastructure Fund;
3 amending s. 288.0655, F.S.; revising provisions
4 relating to rural infrastructure projects; revising
5 the percentage of total infrastructure project costs
6 for which the Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic
7 Development may award grants; authorizing the office
8 to award grants for a certain percentage of total
9 infrastructure project costs for certain rural areas
10 of critical economic concern; requiring that funds
11 from the purchase of certain lands by the state or a
12 state agency be appropriated into the Rural
13 Infrastructure Fund; providing an effective date.

14
15 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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17 Section 1. Paragraphs (b), (c), and (e) of subsection (2)
18 of section 288.0655, Florida Statutes, are amended, and
19 subsection (6) is added to that section, to read:

20 288.0655 Rural Infrastructure Fund.—

21 (2)

22 (b) To facilitate access of rural communities and rural
23 areas of critical economic concern as defined by the Rural
24 Economic Development Initiative to infrastructure funding
25 programs of the Federal Government, such as those offered by the
26 United States Department of Agriculture and the United States
27 Department of Commerce, and state programs, including those
28 offered by Rural Economic Development Initiative agencies, and
29 to facilitate local government or private infrastructure funding

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30 efforts, the office may award grants for up to 50 ~~30~~ percent of
31 the total infrastructure project cost. If an application for
32 funding is for a catalyst site, as defined in s. 288.0656, the
33 office may award grants for up to 60 ~~40~~ percent of the total
34 infrastructure project cost. Eligible projects must be related
35 to specific job-creation or job-retention opportunities.
36 Eligible projects may also include improving any inadequate
37 infrastructure that has resulted in regulatory action that
38 prohibits economic or community growth or reducing the costs to
39 community users of proposed infrastructure improvements that
40 exceed such costs in comparable communities. Eligible uses of
41 funds shall include improvements to public infrastructure for
42 industrial or commercial sites and upgrades to or development of
43 public tourism infrastructure. Authorized infrastructure may
44 include the following public or public-private partnership
45 facilities: storm water systems; telecommunications facilities;
46 broadband facilities; roads or other remedies to transportation
47 impediments; nature-based tourism facilities; or other physical
48 requirements necessary to facilitate tourism, trade, and
49 economic development activities in the community. Authorized
50 infrastructure may also include publicly or privately owned
51 self-powered nature-based tourism facilities, publicly owned
52 telecommunications facilities, and broadband facilities, and
53 additions to the distribution facilities of the existing natural
54 gas utility as defined in s. 366.04(3)(c), the existing electric
55 utility as defined in s. 366.02, or the existing water or
56 wastewater utility as defined in s. 367.021(12), or any other
57 existing water or wastewater facility, which owns a gas or
58 electric distribution system or a water or wastewater system in

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59 this state where:

60 1. A contribution-in-aid of construction is required to
61 serve public or public-private partnership facilities under the
62 tariffs of any natural gas, electric, water, or wastewater
63 utility as defined herein; and

64 2. Such utilities as defined herein are willing and able to
65 provide such service.

66 (c) To facilitate timely response and induce the location
67 or expansion of specific job creating opportunities, the office
68 may award grants for infrastructure feasibility studies, design
69 and engineering activities, or other infrastructure planning and
70 preparation activities. Authorized grants shall be up to \$50,000
71 for an employment project with a business committed to create at
72 least 100 jobs, up to \$150,000 for an employment project with a
73 business committed to create at least 300 jobs, and up to
74 \$300,000 for a project in a rural area of critical economic
75 concern. Grants awarded under this paragraph may be used in
76 conjunction with grants awarded under paragraph (b) ~~if, provided~~
77 ~~that~~ the total amount of both grants does not exceed 30 percent
78 of the total project cost. However, if the state or a state
79 agency intends to purchase at least 20,000 acres of land located
80 within 15 square miles of a rural area of critical economic
81 concern, the total amount of both grants may not exceed 75
82 percent of the total project cost. In evaluating applications
83 under this paragraph, the office shall consider the extent to
84 which the application seeks to minimize administrative and
85 consultant expenses.

86 (e) To enable local governments to access the resources
87 available pursuant to s. 403.973(18), the office may award

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88 grants for surveys, feasibility studies, and other activities
89 related to the identification and preclearance review of land
90 which is suitable for preclearance review. Authorized grants
91 under this paragraph shall not exceed \$75,000 each, except in
92 the case of a project in a rural area of critical economic
93 concern, in which case the grant shall not exceed \$300,000. Any
94 funds awarded under this paragraph must be matched at a level of
95 50 percent with local funds, except that any funds awarded for a
96 project in a rural area of critical economic concern must be
97 matched at a level of 33 percent with local funds. If an
98 application for funding is for a catalyst site, as defined in s.
99 288.0656, or if the state or a state agency intends to purchase
100 at least 20,000 acres of land located within 15 square miles of
101 a rural area of critical economic concern, the requirement for
102 local match may be waived pursuant to the process in s.
103 288.06561. In evaluating applications under this paragraph, the
104 office shall consider the extent to which the application seeks
105 to minimize administrative and consultant expenses.

106 (6) When the state or a state agency purchases at least
107 20,000 acres of land located within 15 square miles of a rural
108 area of critical economic concern, an amount of funds equal to
109 at least 7.5 percent of the total purchase price must be
110 appropriated into the Rural Infrastructure Fund and used in
111 accordance with paragraphs (2) (b), (c), and (e) in the region
112 effected by the land purchase. The funds appropriated into the
113 Rural Infrastructure Fund must come from the same source used in
114 the land purchase and shall be appropriated in equal
115 installments for 5 years thereafter.

116 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2010.